

Historic Routes and Significant Resources

Historic Routes



OREGON NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL

The enabling legislation (Public Law 95-625 amendment to the National Trails System Act, Public Law 90-543) authorized a primary route, between Independence, Missouri, and Oregon City, Oregon. Table 1 summarizes the approximate miles by state.

The general route is also shown on map 1. The National Trails System Act requires official route maps for each trail. For the Oregon National Historic Trail the route has been digitized using ARC-INFO, a geographic information system (GIS). The description of the route will be published in the Federal Register. If new research identifies more accurate route locations, an official notice of correction will be published.

When the Oregon National Historic Trail legislation was passed, Congress decided to concentrate on the most important right-of-way for purposes of official designation and marking. Where an alternative right-of-way of equal importance existed, both were selected. The years 1841–48 were designated for determining the primary route, to avoid confusion with the route of the forty-niners to California. This route also includes the Barlow Road between The Dalles and Oregon City, Oregon, which was developed in 1846. Congress authorized a single route, except for a 126-mile branch (South Alternate Route) between Three Island Crossing, Idaho, and eastern Oregon, and a 114-mile branch (Columbia River Route) used between 1841 and 1846 extending from The Dalles to Oregon City, Oregon (see maps 1 and 7-9).

The route of the Oregon National Historic Trail begins at Independence, Missouri. The emigrants followed the older Santa Fe Trail to the southwest for about 40 miles, then headed northwest for the Platte River. Emigrants crossed the rolling hills of the eastern Great Plains, bisected by numerous rivers and streams, such as the Wakarusa, Kansas, Red Vermillion, Black Vermillion, and Big Blue Rivers. They followed the Little Blue River valley (into Nebraska) and when the river turned south, they continued northwest to the broad Platte River valley.

The emigrants followed the Platte River to its forks in western Nebraska, crossed the South Platte at California Hill, and descended in the North Platte valley through Ash Hollow. After Ft. Laramie, the first major stopping place on the trail, emigrants moved northwest over the dry ranges connecting the meanders of the North Platte

Table 1: Oregon National Historic Trail — Route Miles by State

State	Miles
Missouri	32
Kansas	177
Nebraska	437
Wyoming	598
Idaho	534
Oregon.....	555
Washington	55
Total	2,388

River, crossed and left the North Platte at present-day Casper, and headed southwest across the high range country of Wyoming toward Independence Rock.

After South Pass, which many emigrants considered to be the half-way point of their trip, they crossed the Dry Sandy and the Big Sandy and eventually reached the welcome water, grass, and shade of the Green River. They then proceeded to Fort Bridger, the second of the major resupply points along the trail, which was then a small and isolated fur trading post.

After Fort Bridger, the emigrants went over the rugged Bear River Divide, followed the Bear River into Idaho, and then left it to head across the desert toward Fort Hall, on the banks of the Snake River. Fort Hall was a fur trading post operated by the Hudson’s Bay Company. It was also a supply point and aid station for the weary emigrants.

After Fort Hall, the emigrants followed the line of the Snake River through southern Idaho. They forded the Snake River at Three Island Crossing, whenever possible. Once across, they skirted the mountains north of the Snake toward Fort Boise, another Hudson’s Bay Company trading post, and another spot where rest and resupply were possible before crossing the Snake. Approximately half of the emigrants were unable to cross the river at Three Island Crossing, and were forced to use the 126-mile South Alternate Route. Days of hot

and dusty travel along the south bank of the Snake awaited emigrants before they could rejoin the main route just west of Fort Boise.

After Fort Boise they crossed the arid range land of eastern Oregon, broken by the Malheur River, and met the Snake for the last time at Farewell Bend. They then turned northwest toward the Columbia River at The Dalles and the Blue Mountains. After the taxing crossing of the Blue Mountains emigrants turned west and crossed north-central Oregon. They forded the John Day and Deschutes Rivers, and they finally descended into the Columbia River valley just east of The Dalles.

The overland portion of the trail ended at The Dalles until 1846, when the Barlow Road was opened. Before that time, the emigrants built rafts to travel down the Columbia River to Fort Vancouver, and then up the Willamette River to Oregon City. After 1846 most emigrants preferred to head south from The Dalles to Tygh Valley and then west across the southern shoulder of Mount Hood on the Barlow Road. They then crossed the Cascade Range at Barlow Pass and descended into Oregon City.



CALIFORNIA NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL

The enabling legislation authorized all routes and cutoffs. (See maps 1-6). Table 2 summarizes the approximate number of trail miles by state.

The general route is also shown on map 1. The National Trails System Act requires official route maps for each trail. For the California National Historic Trail the routes have been digitized using ARC-INFO, a geographic information system. The description of the route will be published in the Federal Register. If new research identifies more accurate trail locations, an official notice of correction will be published.

California Trail (1841)

From jumping-off places along the Missouri River, emigrants bound for Oregon or California shared the same transportation corridor. This corridor followed the Platte and Sweetwater Rivers to South Pass. It continued to Ft. Bridger trading post (established in 1843) and then turned northwest to reach the Snake River at Ft. Hall trading post (established in 1834). Oregon-bound emigrants continued along the Snake River while those going to California turned south-

Table 2: California National Historic Trail — Route Miles by State

State	Miles
Missouri	55
Kansas	650
Nebraska	1,562
Colorado	16
Wyoming.....	1,441
Idaho	548
Oregon	424
Utah	628
Nevada	1,423
California	1,383
Total	8,130

west at the Raft River to reach the Humboldt River and then cross the Sierra Nevada to California.

From 1841 to 1856, the overland emigrant routes to California proliferated at both ends of the trail to almost two dozen trails, cutoffs, branches, or alternates. The gold rush provided the greatest impetus for this rapidly expanding trail complex. But even before 1849, a well-developed system of emigrant trails to California had emerged.

Starting Points

Over time, numerous jumping-off places along the Missouri River accommodated increased emigrant traffic (see maps 1 and 2). The more significant were:

- *Missouri-Kansas Border*—The earliest routes began in Jackson County, Missouri, and followed the Santa Fe trail southwest. They left the Santa Fe Trail near Gardner, Kansas, heading for the Platte River by crossing the Wakarusa, Kansas, and Big Blue

Rivers, then following the Little Blue northwest toward the Platte.

The following routes also received extensive use:

- *California Trail from Independence*—This route ran south from the Upper and Lower Independence Landings on the river to the Independence Town Square, then southwest meeting the Blue Ridge alternate trail route from Independence near the Rice farm house.

The route continued generally on the ridge southwest to the crossing of the Blue River (known today as the Red Bridge crossing). Continuing to the Missouri state line, the route exited at the later location of New Santa Fe. It continued past Lone Elm campground to its junction with the route from Westport, near Gardner, Kansas, and just east of the Oregon Trail junction.
- *Westport Landing to Westport*—This route began at Westport Landing in 1834. This was originally a route up and out of the steep river bluffs of the Missouri for traders and trappers. With the founding of Westport 4 miles south in 1834, it became the route from the landings. It became the direct route from Westport Landing (also known by the late 1840s as Kansas Landing) to Westport and beyond.
- *California Trail from Westport*—Emigrants bound for California first used this route in 1841, when much of the Bidwell-Bartleson party followed the Santa Fe Trail from Westport to their Sapling Grove rendezvous. The route then continued past Indian Creek crossing and Elm Grove to the junction with the Independence Route, just east of the Oregon Trail junction. At that point they left this route and followed the Oregon Trail to the Wakarusa and beyond.
- *Westport to Lawrence Road (The California Road)*—Originally a trail through the lands of the Shawnee Indians, this route followed the north branch of the Santa Fe Trail from Westport through the lands of the three Shawnee Indian Missions, then branched off to continue west through present-day northern Johnson and Douglas Counties in Kansas, to the western Shawnee settlements on the Wakarusa river. Here the route joined the Oregon Trail at the Lower Bluejacket Crossing.
- *Gum Springs to Fort Leavenworth*—This was the primary land route for travelers from Westport Landing and Westport to Fort Leavenworth and its routes west. From Westport the emigrants followed the north branch of the Santa Fe Trail from Westport, leaving that route to cross Turkey Creek and meet the Fort

Leavenworth Military Road at the site of Gum Springs. From Gum Springs the route followed the Fort Leavenworth road northwest 4.5 miles to the Delaware (Grinter) crossing of the Kansas river. The route continued north on the military road, through the lands of the Delaware Indians, to Fort Leavenworth.

- *Fort Leavenworth to Big Blue Crossing*—First conceived by Col. Stephen W. Kearney, this route ran from Fort Leavenworth west, passing at 8 miles the junction with the route to the Kansas River, then continued west past Stranger Creek, to junctures with the St. Joseph Road near the Big Blue Crossing.
- *Fort Leavenworth to Kansas River*—Established by the military in 1850, this route branched off the Fort Leavenworth to Big Blue route, 8 miles west of the fort. It continued past present Ozawkie, crossed Soldier Creek north of Topeka, and met the main Oregon-California Trail near Topeka.
- *Union Ferry Alternate Route*—This route branched off the main trail near Big Springs and ran south of present-day Topeka and the Papin’s Ferry Kansas River crossing for about 35 miles. The route continued up the south side of the Kansas River, passing near Smith Ferry, crossing the Kansas River near Union Town at the Union Ferry, rejoining the main trail about 2 miles north of the river near present-day Rossville.
- *St. Joseph*—Another major jumping-off trail developed in 1844 when the St. Joseph Road opened. Many emigrants traveled up the Missouri River to St. Joseph, disembarked there and continued west to the gold fields. During the years 1849-1851, more gold seekers departed that jumping-off point than any other along the Missouri. After leaving the river bottoms, the trail extended through rolling country to the west crossing the Wolf, Nemaha, and Big Blue Rivers before junctioning with the Independence Road west of Marysville.
- *Council Bluffs Area*—Another major starting area grew in the later 1840s and 1850s near the mouth of the Platte, generally called the Council Bluffs area (later Greater Omaha) and included the Mormon Ferry to Winter Quarters, Kaneshville, Bellevue, and Plattsmouth. Trails led westward from these jumping-off places, some on the north side of the Platte River others on the south side, together comprising the “Great Platte River Road.”
- *Nebraska City (old Ft. Kearny)*—At about the same time, another major beginning location emerged south of the Council Bluffs area, first near the abandoned original Ft. Kearny on the west side of the Missouri River and later on this site (Nebraska City).

From this location, came the earlier Oxbow Trail and the later Nebraska City Cutoff.

Alternate Routes, Branches and Cutoffs of the California Trail

Numerous alternate routes, branches, and cutoffs evolved through time as emigrants searched for easier and faster ways to reach their destinations.

- *Humboldt River route (1841)*—The Bidwell-Bartleson Party of 1841 made the first overland emigrant attempt to reach northern California by way of the Humboldt River. Leaving the Oregon Trail near Soda Springs (Idaho), they followed the Bear River south, then turned west around the north end of the Great Salt Lake, searching for a way to the Humboldt River. Beyond Pilot Peak, they abandoned their remaining wagons, finally reaching the Humboldt River west of modern Elko, Nevada. Following the Humboldt River to its sink, the party then sought to cross the Sierra Nevada by turning southwest, where they struggled over the mountains somewhere near today’s Sonora Pass. Though their attempt to reach California was a failure, they had opened the trail along the Humboldt River, which would become the primary artery to California in following years. No west-bound emigrant parties tried to reach California directly overland in 1842. However, a small east-bound party of 13 returned to Missouri using the Humboldt River route.
- *Raft River-Bishop Canyon route to the Humboldt River (1843)*—Joseph Chiles, a member of the Bidwell-Bartleson group, organized an emigrant wagon party in 1843 and west of Ft. Laramie met Joseph Walker who agreed to guide them. Due to a lack of supplies at Ft. Hall, Chiles and Walker divided their party into a pack train and wagon train. Chiles led the pack train trying to reach California through eastern Oregon by outflanking the Sierra Nevada. After a long and arduous trip, Chiles’ pack train reached Sutter’s Fort in November. Meanwhile, Walker had led his group to the Humboldt River (via the Raft River, City of Rocks, Goose Creek, Thousand Springs Valley, and Bishop Canyon) opening up the next segment of the California Trail, which became known as the Ft. Hall Road. After following the Humboldt to its sink, Walker and his party turned southwest, then south, retracing his route of 1833–34. They finally crossed the southern end of the Sierra Nevada through Walker Pass, and entered the southern part of the great Central Valley of California.
- *Sublette/Greenwood Cutoff and Truckee-Donner route (1844)*—After having pioneered the Sublette/Greenwood Cutoff west of South

Pass, the Elisha Stephens Party continued on the Oregon Trail to the Raft River where they followed the route used the previous year by the Walker party. Reaching the Humboldt sink, Stephens confronted the same dilemma that the parties of 1841 and 1843 had faced—how to surmount the Sierra Nevada. At that critical juncture, they met and were guided by the Paiute Indian chief whom they named “Truckee.” He took them west across the Forty Mile Desert to the bend in the Truckee River south of Lake Pyramid. From there, Chief Truckee directed them to follow the river through two difficult canyons to an opening over the Sierra Nevada (later known as Donner Pass, but more accurately as Stephens Pass). Facing snow in late November, the Stephens Party left some of their wagons near Donner Lake and made it over the pass.

- *Dog Valley segment of the Truckee-Donner route and the Wells branch of the Raft River route (1845)*—On Greenwood’s return trip from Sutter’s Fort in 1845, he worked out a permanent wagon route via Dog Valley that avoided the treacherous Truckee River gorge leading to Donner Pass. Apparently, after leaving Thousand Springs Valley, Greenwood and his two sons bypassed the Bishop Canyon route used the two previous years and reached the source of the Humboldt at the natural wells near present-day Wells, Nevada. From the Humboldt Wells they turned west to meet the Bishop Canyon route, thereby opening up a new branch to reach the Humboldt River.
- *Roller Pass (1846)*—In late September of 1846, Greenwood found an easier route over the Sierra Nevada. This time he led his party south of Donner Pass, up Coldstream Valley and Emigrant Canyon, then over the pass between Mt. Judah and Mt. Lincoln, which became known as Roller Pass (from the use of chains attached to wagons and pulled up steep slopes over rolling logs). This final realignment of the Truckee-Donner route completed the wagon route from the Truckee River to Sutter’s Fort.
- *Applegate Trail or Southern Road to Oregon (1846)*—The year 1846 witnessed a number of trail openings. Seeking a safer and more direct route to the Willamette Valley in Oregon, the Applegate brothers, Jesse and Lindsey, along with Levi Scott, led a group from the Willamette Valley into the northeastern corner of California, south around Goose Lake, then southwest through High Rock Canyon and over the Black Rock Desert, finally connecting with the Humboldt River route at the northern tip of today’s Rye Patch Reservoir. Soon a number of Oregon-bound emigrants branched off the Humboldt River route on this new Southern Road to Oregon (as it was also known).

- *Hastings Cutoff (1846)*—In 1846 Lansford Hastings led the first wagon train on a supposed shortcut west from Ft. Bridger. This party entered the Salt Lake Valley and crossed the Great Salt Lake Desert to connect with the California Trail where the South Fork of the Humboldt enters the Humboldt River. The Mormon exodus to Salt Lake Valley in 1847 would use the Hastings-Donner route from Ft. Bridger. During the gold rush years of 1849–50, some parties would follow Hastings’ desert trail west of Salt Lake City to the Humboldt River.
- *Cooke-Graham Wagon Road to Southern California (1846–48)*—During the War with Mexico in 1846, Col. Cooke with his Mormon Battalion volunteers opened up a wagon road from Santa Fe to southern California, via the Rio Grande, San Pedro River, and Gila River. With an important realignment by Maj. Graham in 1848, via the Santa Cruz River, this wagon road would become the principal route to California from the southern states and Mexico during the gold rush years. This route is also known as the Southern Trail.
- *Mormon Trail to Southern California (1848)*—As a means of establishing settlements in southern California, Mormon leadership arranged in late 1847 for the opening of a trail from Salt Lake City to Los Angeles, utilizing a long segment of the Old Spanish Trail. By early 1848 Mormons had established a successful pack trail, which they soon developed into a wagon trail. Mormon guides would lead forty-niners who arrived late in the summer at Salt Lake City and feared to venture across the Sierra Nevada, on this newly opened wagon trail to southern California.
- *Mormon-Carson Trail (1848)*—A group of former members of the disbanded Mormon Battalion to avoid the rigors of the Truckee-Donner route on their return to Salt Lake City, decided in the summer of 1848 to pioneer a new route along the Humboldt. Beginning at Pleasant Valley, east of what would become Placerville, they followed ridges to the crest of the Sierra Nevada and then made their way over Carson Pass and along the Carson River to a point near modern Fallon, Nevada. From there they struck northwest to the bend in the Truckee River, where they joined the main California Trail. As they headed east along the Humboldt River, the Mormon group met Chiles, again leading an emigrant train west, and informed him of their new wagon trail. Having been on the Carson River with the earlier Bidwell-Bartleson party, Chiles decided to turn southwest at the Humboldt sink and blaze a wagon trail to the Carson River, about where the Mormon group had left it for the Truckee (a place during the gold rush known as “Rag Town.”) This final link across the Forty Mile Desert completed the opening of the

important Mormon-Carson Trail (or Carson Trail) to the gold fields.

- *Hensley’s Salt Lake Cutoff (1848)*—In 1848, frontiersman Samuel Hensley led his pack train back to Salt Lake Valley and turned north then west around the Great Salt Lake to reach the California Trail at the western end of City of Rocks. Continuing along the Humboldt River, Hensley met the returning Mormon group, who had just opened up the Carson Trail, and told them about his new cutoff. At City of Rocks, the Mormon group found Hensley’s pack trail and took their wagons over it to Salt Lake Valley, thereby adapting the cutoff to wagon use.
- *Lassen Trail (1848)*—Also in 1848, Peter Lassen and a small wagon train left the Humboldt via the Applegate Trail to reach his ranch in northern Sacramento Valley. Lassen turned off the Applegate Trail at the southern end of Goose Lake and led his party down the Pit River and beyond until the group became demoralized and in need of provisions. Fortunately, an Oregon group led by Peter Burnett and headed for the gold fields, caught up with Lassen’s party about 50 miles from his ranch. The Oregonians provided aid and assisted the stragglers. Though longer than the Truckee or Carson routes, the combined Applegate-Lassen Trails became the fourth major route to California during the gold rush. (The other three were the Truckee-Donner Route, the Mormon-Carson Trail, and the Cooke-Graham Wagon Road.)
- *Hudspeth Cutoff (1849)*—Benoni Hudspeth and John J. Myers, intending to shave days off their travel time by bypassing Ft. Hall, split off the California Trail in a westerly direction where the Bear River bends south at Soda Springs in southeastern Idaho. Six days later they rejoined the California Trail where it leaves the Raft River, probably far short of their hoped-for savings in time and distance. The bulk of the remaining migration followed this new Hudspeth Cutoff, though in fact it was not much of an improvement over the older Ft. Hall route.
- *Cherokee Trail to California (1849–50 and the Overland Trail in Wyoming)*—The Cherokee Trail is unique in that it was primarily a route to the gold fields for members of the Cherokee Nation who had been forcibly resettled earlier in Indian Territory (later Oklahoma and Arkansas). Beginning in 1849 several wagon companies of Cherokee Indians along with some non-American Indians used existing trails and some that they pioneered to reach the main Oregon-California-Mormon Trail west of the Green River near Ft. Bridger. Leaving the Grand (Neosho) River at Grand Saline (in Oklahoma), they headed northwest to the Santa Fe Trail and followed it west to Bent’s Old Fort. From there they

continued along the Arkansas River to Pueblo (Colorado) and then turned north along the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains, passing northwesterly over the Laramie Plains to near Medicine Bow Butte (Wyoming) where they turned west to the Green River. After crossing the Green River and joining the main trail to Ft. Bridger, the Cherokee companies continued on existing trails to California. Also in 1850 Capt. Howard Stansbury of the Topographical Engineers, surveyed this route in southern Wyoming, which became known in the later 1850’s as the Overland Trail and would be used by emigrants and the Overland Stage.

- *Southern Routes to California (1849)*—To accommodate gold rushers flooding to California through the southern states in 1849, several new wagon roads were opened that connected to the existing Southern Trail (Cooke-Graham Wagon Road of 1846/48). For the gold rushers landing in the Gulf ports of Texas, two new roads crossed the unsettled western frontier of Texas to El Paso on the Rio Grande: the Upper Road from Austin and the Lower Road from San Antonio. From El Paso emigrants could take several routes to link up with the Southern Trail. Two other wagon roads began at Ft. Smith, on the Arkansas-Indian Territory border. Both were surveyed and opened by Capt. Randolph Marcy during 1849: the Ft. Smith to Santa Fe Trail along the Canadian River (in Oklahoma) and the Ft. Smith to El Paso Trail (through northern Texas).

Opening of Post-1849 Trails into Northern California

The discovery of new gold fields up and down the Mother Lode country after 1849 led civic and entrepreneurial promoters to open up trails to their favored location in rapid succession. All of these trails branched off one of the three main northern routes to California and usually were opened from west to east. Some proved successful while others were short lived or little used.

- *Off the Truckee-Donner Route*—Nevada City Road (1850), Beckwourth Trail (1851) to Bidwell Bar-Marysville, and Henness Pass Road (1852) to Marysville.
- *Off the Mormon-Carson Route*—Dagget Pass—Georgetown Pack Trail (1850) to Georgetown, Johnson Cutoff (1850–51) to Placerville, Grizzly Flat Road (1852), Volcano Road (1852), Walker River-Sonora Trail (1852) to Sonora, Placer County Road (1852) to Auburn, Luther Pass Trail (1854) to shorten the Johnson Cutoff, and Big Tree Road (1856) to Stockton.

- *Off the Applegate Trail*—Nobles Trail (1852) to Shasta City and the Yreka Trail (1852).

Central Cutoffs during the 1850s

During the California Gold Rush period of the 1850s emigrants and their guides pioneered numerous cutoffs and alternates to shorten their journey, have more access to water and feed, or avoid river crossings. Most of these cutoffs and alternatives were on the central portion of the Oregon-California-Mormon Trails in Wyoming.

- *Childs Cutoff (1850)*—Andrew Childs opened up a new route on the north side of the North Platte River from Ft. Laramie to where the south side trail had to cross to the north side in the vicinity of what would become Casper. This avoided a crossing of the North Platte River and the heavier traffic on the south side.
- *Seminole Cutoff (early 1850s)*—This cutoff takes its name from Basil LaJeunesse, known by Shoshoni Indians with whom he lived as Seminole. It was opened up on the south side of the Sweetwater River sometime in the early 1850’s, between Ice Slough and South Pass, to avoid several crossings of the river and Rocky Ridge.
- *Sublette/Greenwood Cutoff Alternates*—To avoid the near 50 mile crossing of the waterless Sublette Cutoff, numerous alternates (cutoffs on cutoffs) opened up beginning in 1852. They can be divided conveniently between those that are east and west of the Green River. (The Sublette Cutoff arched over both east and west). East of the Green River were the Kinney Cutoffs (there were three) and their variant, the Baker-Davis Road, that branched off the Big Sandy River before crossing the Green River at various ferry sites. West of the Green River was the continuation of the Kinney Cutoffs known as the Slate Creek Cutoff. This cutoff eventually joined the Sublette Cutoff near Rocky Gap. Then in 1854 the Dempsey-Hockaday Cutoff branched off the Sublette Cutoff in this vicinity and reached the main trail in Bear River Valley north of the Sublette Cutoff. Many of these cutoffs on cutoffs between the Parting of the Ways and Bear River Valley could be used interchangeably.

Government Roads in the Late 1850s.

To ensure a stable and secure transportation and communication link with the fast growing far-western communities, Congress and the federal government, after much political maneuvering due to sectional

concerns, funded construction for new roads and improvements on existing trails. Under the auspices of either the department of the interior or the department of war, three new roads directed toward California were constructed and other existing California trails were improved.

- *Lander Road (1858)*—Frederick Lander laid out the Lander Road from South Pass to Ft. Hall, and then improved the existing trail from Ft. Hall to City of Rocks. This became a primary route for emigrants beginning in 1858. Lander made other significant improvements on sections of the Applegate Trail and Nobles Trail in 1860, mainly enlarging water holes. The improved trail segment from the Humboldt to Honey Lake near Susanville was called the Road to Honey Lake.
- *Central Overland Trail (1859)*—James Simpson, of the U.S. Topographical Engineers, constructed an alternate road from Ft. Bridger directly to Camp Floyd (later Ft. Crittendon) in 1858. In the following year, Simpson quickly laid out the Central Overland Trail from Camp Floyd to the Carson River. Because of increasing Indian depredations along the Humboldt River route, emigrant wagon trains switched to Simpson’s new wagon road, especially during the Civil War period. In 1860–61, the Pony Express used this trail (deviating from it in some places).
- *Beale Road (1858) and Mojave Road (1859)*—Edward Beale laid out the third new wagon road—the Beale Road—along the 35th parallel from Albuquerque, New Mexico, to the Mohave Villages on the Colorado River in 1858. In the following year, the military—supplying the new Ft. Mojave (at the Mohave villages) from Los Angeles—extended the Beale Road across the Mojave Desert. This desert extension west of the Colorado River to the Mormon Trail/Old Spanish Trail is known as the Mojave Road.



MORMON PIONEER NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL

The enabling legislature authorized a route commemorating the 1846–47 journey of the Mormon Pioneer party (see maps 1 and 10-11). Table 3 summarizes the approximate number of trail miles by state.

The National Trails System Act requires official route maps for each trail. For the Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail the route has been digitized using ARC-INFO, a geographic information system. The description of the route will be published in the Federal Register.

Table 3: Mormon National Historic Trail — Route Miles by State

State	Miles
Illinois	2
Iowa	317
Nebraska	511
Wyoming	511
Utah	74
Total	1,415

If new research identifies more accurate trail locations, an official notice of correction will be published.

The route begins at Nauvoo, Illinois, a former Sauk and Fox Indian village located on the east bank of the Mississippi River. Under the leadership of Brigham Young, the original Pioneer party launched their exodus February 4, 1846, making the crossing by ferry to the Iowa shore. The route in Iowa commenced at Sugar Creek Camp, where, on March 1, 1846, the main camp began to roll up the east side of the Des Moines river, forded the river near Bonaparte, then paralleled the southern border of Iowa to the Corydon vicinity. From there they turned northward across the prairie to near Osceola, then traveled westward to the Council Bluff area and the Missouri river, arriving there on June 13, 1846.

The Mormon pioneers crossed the Missouri River to enter the state of Nebraska on June 29, 1846. They established the Mormon settlement of Winter Quarters on the west bank, which was then frontier lands of the Omaha Indian Nation. That summer, advance parties traveled as far as the Elkhorn Loup and Niobrara valleys in quest of desirable wintering sites.

The trek across Nebraska began from Winter Quarters in April 1847. The pioneers assembled first at the Crossing of the Elkhorn, then later at Liberty Pole Camp on the bank of the Platte, near Fremont. They followed the broad floodplain of the Platte River to Columbus, turned up the Loup Fork to pass Pawnee Mission, then crossed the Loup River near the 98th meridian and returned to the Platte River near Grand Island.

Brigham Young and his followers paralleled the north side of the Platte, measuring and recording their travel for future trail guidance. Upon reaching the junction of the North and South Forks of the Platte, they chose to move along the northern branch of the river where, on May 18, they found themselves opposite the camping grounds of Ash Hollow. Leaving the Sand Hills, they passed Chimney Rock, Courthouse Rock, and Scotts Bluff and left Nebraska on May 31 near Henry, where they could see the snow of Laramie Peak far in the west.

Brigham Young and his pioneers entered the Wyoming territory on June 1, 1847, and camped in the vicinity of Fort Laramie (Ft. William), where they were joined by the Mississippi Branch of Latter-day Saints. After conferring with the fort’s inhabitants about trail conditions, they forded the North Platte River and continued west following the Oregon Trail to the Casper area where they established the Mormon Ferry to recross the river.

They departed the North Platte to continue overland to the Sweetwater River and Independence Rock. The pioneers then proceeded up that drainage to cross the Continental Divide at South Pass. In the Pacific drainage, they followed the Big Sandy and its tributary to the Green River.

Leaving the Green River Valley, the Mormon pioneer party continued along the Oregon Trail to Fort Bridger, then followed the Donner-Reed Trail, crossing the Bear River, and departed the state of Wyoming in the vicinity of the Needles.

Entering the present day Utah, Brigham Young and his followers passed Cache Cave, then proceeded down the precipitous Echo Canyon, followed the Weber River north to Henefer, then turned away from the river and up the main canyon to Hogsback Summit. There they had their first real view of the Wasatch country. They continued along the Donner-Reed route descending to East Canyon, then south along the creek to Mormon Flats. Here they turned west following Little Emigration Canyon to the bald and rocky crest of Big Mountain Pass. They rough-locked their wagon wheels for a straight-down descent to Mountain Dell Canyon where they took a southerly direction. The route then swung west over the dividing ridge of Little Mountain Summit, the last summit on the long trail, and to a sharp descent to Emigration Canyon. The final travel was on the short but treacherous winding and narrow canyon floor of “This is the Place.” The pioneer scouts first reached the Valley of the Great Salt Lake on July 21, 1847; the main body on July 22, and their leader, Brigham Young, due to illness followed the main body two days later.



PONY EXPRESS NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL

The enabling legislation authorized a route of approximately 2,000 miles, including the original route and subsequent route changes, extending from St. Joseph, Missouri to Sacramento, California, as described in the 1987 *Feasibility Study*. Separate legislation in 1992 and a feasibility study resulted in the secretary of the interior adding the route from Sacramento to San Francisco in 1997. Table 4 summarizes the approximate number of trail miles by state and includes the mileage from the Sacramento to San Francisco route.

The general route is shown on maps 1-6. It is difficult to identify a specific set of miles for the Pony Express route because it changed through time, particularly after its starting point moved to Atchison, Kansas.

The National Trails System Act requires official route maps for each trail. For the Pony Express National Historic Trail the route has been digitized using ARC-INFO, a geographic information system. The description of the route will be published in the *Federal Register*. If new research identifies more accurate trail locations, an official notice of correction will be published.

For the most part the eastern segment of the route follows the Oregon, California, and Mormon Pioneer trails through Kansas, Nebraska, and Wyoming. The trail then follows the Mormon Pioneer Trail and the Salt Lake cutoff of the California Trail from Fort Bridger to Salt Lake City.

It broke from the Hastings Cutoff of the California Trail and headed south to avoid the Great Salt Lake. It then proceeded westerly through the barren, desolate desert toward present-day Nevada. The next portion of the route covered high desert and crossed several mountain ranges to Carson City. Then the trail turned south to Genoa, where it reconnected with the Johnson Cutoff of the California Trail. It followed the Carson River and scaled the Sierra Nevada at Echo Summit. From the summit the trail generally followed what is now old Highway 50 through Placerville to Sacramento, California.

Significant Resources

The National Trails System Act provides for the identification of high-potential sites and segments. High-potential sites and segments have been selected using the criteria established in the act. Criteria for consideration as a high-potential site include historic significance,

Table 4: Pony Express National Historic Trail — Route Miles by State

State	Miles
Missouri	1
Kansas	139
Nebraska	441
Colorado	16
Wyoming	540
Utah.....	241
Nevada	404
California	223
Total	2,005

presence of visible historic remnants, scenic quality, and relative freedom from intrusion. High-potential segments are those segments of a trail that afford high quality recreation experience in a portion of the route having greater than average scenic values or affording an opportunity to vicariously share the experience of the original users of a historic route. Each site or segment must have the potential to interpret the trails’ historical significance and to provide opportunities for high-quality recreation.

This plan acknowledges that the lists of high-potential sites and segments for each trail must be flexible requiring periodic updates. Under both alternatives, the plan provides a mechanism for their modification and revision when new information becomes available, or when the integrity of trail resources is compromised.

All of the information on sites and segments gathered during the planning process and submissions received from resource managers and trail organizations through September 18, 1997, have been entered into a database management system. This database will be made available to the Long Distance Trails Office. In the future it will be linked to the GIS mapping effort completed as part of this planning process.

Revisions have been made to the lists of high-potential sites and segments for each trail to reflect comments received during the internal review process.



**OREGON NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL:
HIGH-POTENTIAL SITES AND SEGMENTS UPDATE**

Modifications to the original listing of sites and segments identified in the *Comprehensive Management and Use Plan* for the Oregon National Historic Trail have resulted in the addition of 5 segments and 20 sites, the modification of 1 segment, and the deletion of 7 sites.

Appendixes F and G include a comprehensive list of high-potential resources identified during the planning process. Appendix H includes a list of additional sites and segments that at this time do not appear to merit inclusion among the former.

Table 5 indicates the number of high-potential sites and segments by state. Table 6 displays the mileage of segments by state.



**CALIFORNIA AND PONY EXPRESS NATIONAL HISTORIC
TRAILS: HIGH-POTENTIAL SITES AND SEGMENTS**

From the extensive list of submissions, 264 sites and 53 segments listed in tables 7 and 8 have been identified as high-potential (for a more comprehensive description of these resources, see appendixes C and D and maps 2-6). The segments total 1,935 miles. Some of these sites and segments have already been classified as high-potential in the plans for the Oregon and Mormon Pioneer Trails.

This list can be modified in the future to add sites and segments that additional research might indicate to be worthy of inclusion. Sites and segments can also be deleted from this list.

A list of sites and segments that may merit inclusion as high-potential sites and segments in the future was submitted during the planning process and is presented in appendix E.

**Table 5: Oregon National Historic Trail —
High-Potential Sites and Segments by State**

<i>State</i>	<i>Sites</i>	<i>Segments</i>
Missouri	9	0
Kansas	16	1
Nebraska	19	0
Wyoming	35	5
Idaho	32	3
Oregon	27	6
Washington	2	0
Total	140	15

**Table 6: Oregon National Historic Trail —
Mileage of High-Potential Segments**

<i>State</i>	<i>Number of Segments</i>	<i>Number of Miles</i>
Kansas	1	6
Wyoming	5	239
Idaho	3	105
Oregon	6	82
Total	15	442

**Table 7: California & Pony Express
National Historic Trails —
High-Potential Sites and Segments by State**

<i>State</i>	<i>Sites</i>	<i>Segments</i>
Missouri	14	0
Kansas	36	1
Oklahoma	1	0
Nebraska	25	0
Wyoming	37	8
Colorado	6	0
Utah	26	6
Idaho	16	4
Nevada	36	15
Oregon	15	3
California	48	16
Total	264	53

Table 8: California & Pony Express National Historic Trail — Mileage of High-Potential Segments

State	Number of Segments	Number of Miles
Kansas	1.....	16
Wyoming	8.....	352
Utah	6	606
Idaho	4.....	152
Nevada	15.....	586
Oregon.....	3	49
California	16	234
Total	53	1,935



MORMON PIONEER NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL:
HIGH-POTENTIAL SITES AND SEGMENTS UPDATE

The update of the original listing of sites and segments identified in the *1981 Comprehensive Management and Use Plan* for the Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail have resulted in the addition of 3 segments, the modification and extension of 3 segments, the addition of 7 sites, and the deletion of 33 sites. The plan did not specify mileage for some of the initial protection segments, but a examination of the document maps reveals about 40 miles of trail being identified as high-potential. This plan expands that mileage to 303 miles, a substantial increase.

Sites deleted from the list of high-potential sites fail to meet the criteria for high-potential described in the legislation or are not associated with the pioneer trip of 1846–47. The original plan rated most of these sites C-2 indicating that they were of low priority and related to the period after the pioneer migration. However, many of these sites are part of the expanded high-potential segments and would continue to receive the protection such designation entails. Other sites have been deleted because there is disagreement as to their location.

Appendixes I and J include a comprehensive list of high-potential resources identified during the planning process. Appendix K includes a list of additional sites and segments that at this time do not appear to merit inclusion among the former.

Table 9 indicates the number of high-potential sites and segments by state. Table 10 displays the mileage of segments by state.

Table 9: Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trails — High-Potential Sites and Segments by State

State	Sites	Segments
Illinois	2	0
Iowa	10.....	0
Nebraska	10	0
Wyoming.....	28	4
Utah	5.....	2
Total	55	6

Table 10: Mormon Pioneer Historic Trail — Mileage of High-Potential Segments

State	Number of Segments	Number of Miles
Wyoming	4.....	208
Utah	2	95
Total	6	303